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# Disaster Relief in 2012

## Disaster Relief Volunteers Needed

The United Church of Christ looks forward to working with National Disaster Ministries UCC / Wider Church Ministries and other local partners in the Birmingham area on repairing/rebuilding homes damaged by tornadoes earlier this year. There are a number of volunteer work groups who will be heading to Birmingham in 2012. Read the following letter from **Mary Schaller Blaufuss**, *Executive, UCC Volunteer Ministries,* and **Florence Coppola**, *Executive, UCC National Disaster Ministries*. There are many ways you can assist those in need.

Friends,
As you know and perhaps experienced where you live, this year there have been a number of disasters in the United States. Local communities are organizing to determine how to best address needs of people impacted. Birmingham, AL is now ready to receive volunteer work groups to assist with repairing/rebuilding homes. Three UCC local churches are offering housing to work groups. The UCC is partnering with the Central Alabama Long Term Recovery Committee and Habitat for Humanity in this recovery effort. Please see below the information on several other locations that have experienced disasters this year. As soon as any of these communities are ready to receive volunteer work groups that information will be sent to you and posted under Volunteer Ministries on the UCC web site. I have provided here the link to the Birmingham registration information. Please share this throughout your Conference. Thank you for your continuing support of disaster ministries.

Peace,

Florence

Visit the UCC Volunteer Ministries website

**The following is additional information for disaster related mission trips.**
**Registration Open -** Volunteers in Long-Term Disaster Recovery - Birmingham, Alabama
The stage of **Long-Term Recovery** has just begun - Registration is now open for groups to serve in Birmingham, AL during 2012.

**Coming this spring and summer -** probable group volunteer opportunities in long-term disaster recovery in New York state, Bismarck, North Dakota, Vermont, and Joplin, MO. Long Term Recovery committees have formed in these areas and are working. They are figuring out issues related to zoning and housing for groups, case management for home owners and financial resources available to rebuild. Some are at the point of hiring volunteer coordinators and local construction site coordinators. UCC national staff, along with members of the network of Conference Disaster Coordinators in each effected area, continue to consult closely with each local committee. As opportunities are available - we will notify you of the registration website.

In some locations, local communities decide to do disaster recovery using resources other than volunteer groups from outside the area. Bloomsburg, PA and Raleigh, NC are two such locations. The Penn Central Conference Disaster

Ministries team organized people to participate in service days in Bloomsburg during the fall. In Raleigh, NC, local UCC people will participate in service days on December 10 and December 17.

**Volunteers in UCC Long-Term Disaster Recovery When a Disaster Happens -** You in the UCC are involved through your contributions to **One Great Hour of Sharing** that are used to provide emergency grants to UCC churches, to assist local Long Term Recovery Organizations to form, and to coordinate with local UCC churches for providing housing. A network of UCC Disaster Coordinators appointed by their UCC conferences work with the Office for National Disaster Ministries in response to disasters in their region. For more information visit UCC Conference Disaster Coordinator website.

Long Term Disaster Recovery Organizations often take several months to form and ready themselves to receive volunteer groups to serve in long-term recovery efforts - far longer than the current U.S. news media cycle. The Long Term Recovery Organization makes use of existing religious, community social services and volunteer programs, as possible. It serves as a coordinating organization for the wide scope of disaster recovery needed in an effected community. The Long Term Recovery Organization provides case management for home-owners, building materials, tools, local construction site coordinator and local volunteer coordinator.
Local UCC churches are coordinated through UCC National Disaster and Volunteer Ministries offices to provide housing accommodations for groups as ministries of hospitality and UCC identity.

The **United Church of Christ** has a visible and active denominational presence in local affected communities through the centralized registration system that utilizes a UCC long-term **Partners in Service** volunteer serving as the UCC registrar. This system assists the local recovering community by providing a contact point for groups rather than the local volunteer coordinator responding to multiple requests. It also helps your group navigate the multiple contacts needed with the local long-term recovery committee and group housing.

Your continued contributions to **Our Church's Wider Mission**, **One Great Hour of Sharing**, and special appeals for particular disasters, such as the Spring Storms appeal, make possible the UCC participation in disaster recovery.

Thank you again for your wonderful commitment to serve others as God's people.

*Peace,*

Mary Schaller Blaufuss and Florence Coppola


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- United Church of Christ
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